CIA Work With Youths At Festivals Defended

By Robert G. Kaiser
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Gloria Steinem, a New York free-lance writer, acknowledged in an interview yesterday that she worked closely with the Centrol Intelligence Agency to organize groups of American young people to attend World Youth Festivals in Vienna and Helsinki in 1959 and 1962.

She strongly defended her actions and had great praise for the CIA agents with whom she collaborated. "I found them liberal and farsighted and open to an exchange of ideas," she said.

"I never felt I was being dictated to at all."

Miss Steinem was director of the Independent Research Service, a group that sponsored the trips of several hundred young Americans to Vienna and Helsinks. Its activities have been financed by a number of fundations, including the Independence Foundation of Boston, already cited by the National Student Association as a conduit of CIA funds.

Robert Kaiser

Gloria Steinem had praise for the CIA while recounting her collaboration with them in organizing student groups to attend international meetings.

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First Admission

This was the first admission by anyone connected with the Research Service that it had collaborated with the CIA.

Miss Steinem said yesterday that she had worked extensively with CIA agents in this country and at the two Youth Festivals.

She said the budget for Research Service activities at the Helsinki Festival was more than $100,000. She declined to say how much of that was CIA money.

Several hundred young Americans went to Helsinki with Research Service aid to offer an alternative to the Communist line of the Festival.

The Research Service also helped pay for a daily newspaper put out in three languages during the Festival by a largely American staff but under the ultimate control of

Finnish editor.

All Conrtolled by Reds

There have been eight World Youth Festivals since World War II. The first six were held behind the Iron Curtain. They have all been controlled by Communists.

Miss Steinem said yesterday that "almost none" of the people who went to Vienna or Helsinki with the Research Service knew that the CIA was helping to pay for their trip.

She also said that no member of either Research Service delegation had passed information to the CIA. "We only planned the best ways to operate," she said. "They wanted to do what we wanted to do—present a heal thy, diverse view of the United States."

She said the Research Service was started without CIA funds, but that the Agency approached her soon after the organization was set up and offered to help.

"The CIA was the only one with enough guts and foresight to see that youth and student affairs were important," she said.

She first decided that youth politics was important during a two-year visit to India after graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Smith College in 1956.

At the Helsniki Festival in 1962, Miss Steinem was co-director of the Research Service, with Dennis Shaul, a former preseident of the National Student Association.

Shaul, now a lawyer in Akron, Ohio, told The Washington Post yesterday that he knew CIA money was helping to finance the Research Service.

"There was always legitimate money involved, too," Shaul said. "To this day I don't know how much CIA money there was."

Shaul said of the Research Service delegation that his only job was "to bring together a group of young people who were representative of America."

"We had Minnesota school teachers who were farther right than Bill Buckley," Shaul said, "as well as members of Students for a Democratic Society. Nobody told them what to say."

Shaul also insisted that no Research Service reports had been given to the CIA. He said only a very few of the people involved in the Research Service knew anything about the CIA connection.